HIGH SCHOOL FARCES

FREDERICK TREVOR HILL

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HIGH SCHOOL FARCES

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

FICTION

THE CASE AND EXCEPTIONS. (*Frederick A. Stokes Company*)
THE MINORITY. (*Frederick A. Stokes Company*)
THE WEB. (*Doubleday, Page & Company*)
THE ACCOMPLICE. (*Harper & Brothers*)
THE 13TH JUROR. (*The Century Co.*)
TALES OUT OF COURT. (*Frederick A. Stokes Company*)
HIGH SCHOOL FARCES. (*Frederick A. Stokes Company*)

HISTORY

LINCOLN THE LAWYER. (*The Century Co.*)
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ON THE TRAIL OF GRANT AND LEE. (*D. Appleton and Company*)
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ESSAYS

LINCOLN'S LEGACY OF INSPIRATION. (*Frederick A. Stokes Company*)

LAW

THE CARE OF ESTATES. (*Baker, Voorhis & Co.*)

HIGH SCHOOL FARCES

Three One Act Playlets for Junior Amateurs

BY

FREDERICK TREVOR HILL

AUTHOR OF "THE CASE AND EXCEPTIONS," "THE MINORITY," "LINCOLN'S LEGACY OF INSPIRATION," ETC.

NEW YORK

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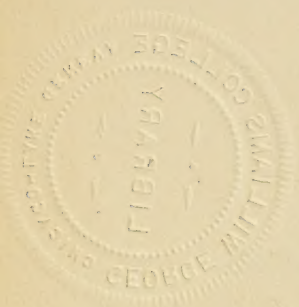

TO

THE ACTORS AND "ACTRICES" OF

THE ALF CLUB

AND TROOP NO. 1 BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

IRVINGTON ON HUDSON

BY WHOM THESE PLAYLETS WERE

ORIGINALLY PRODUCED

FOREWORD

The scarcity of short farces, suitable for junior amateurs, seems to justify the publication of this little volume.

There are, of course, plenty of good one-act plays; but few of them are adapted to the needs of boys and girls. In some cases the themes are not appropriate. But more frequently they make demands in the line of talent, coaching, costume or scenery which present insuperable difficulties to their production by the average school or young people's club.

The three simple little farces included herein were written for a Boys' Club and a Boy Scout Troop. They have been successfully played on more than one occasion. As they require very little study and a minimum of "properties and effects," it is thought they may prove useful to those in search of such material.

F. T. H.

Irvington on Hudson, N. Y.
September, 1920.

"DINNER'S SERVED!"

A Farce in One Act

"DINNER'S SERVED!"
A Farce in One Act

CHARACTERS

(*In the order in which they first speak.*)

Aunt Tilly, *an old negress.*
Pete, *her husband.*
Sergeant Jack Rivers, 13*th Cavalry, U. S. A.*
Corporal Bud Porter, 13*th Cavalry, U. S. A.*
Colonel Pitcher, 13*th Cavalry, U. S. A.*

Scene

Aunt Tilly's cabin near the encampment of 13th Cavalry, U. S. A., at Tampa, Florida.

Time

1898, Spanish-American War.

PROPERTIES

Pots, pans, etc., as indicated in text,
A screen,
2 Army revolvers,
Chicken,
Bacon,
Celery,
Siphon of seltzer,
Vegetables,
2 Two-dollar bills,
A yellow flag.
The furniture, costumes, etc., are indicated in the text.
Acting time, 20 minutes.
Principal Characters, 5 (4 m.; 1 f.)

"DINNER'S SERVED!"

SCENE: AUNT TILLY'S *cabin. Door at left (facing stage) leads to a room. Door at right is the entrance to the cabin. There is a screen at its left. Between the two doors is a large window. Window at right of right door. Kitchen table in center partially set, with two chairs in position. At rear left, kitchen dresser with dishes, cups, pots, pans, etc. Well to left of table a kitchen range on which is a large pot containing a chicken; also a dish in which bacon is frying. All the appointments of cabin are appropriate to a dwelling of poor but thrifty negroes.*

The stage is empty as curtain rises, but AUNT TILLY, *a portly negress, immediately enters carrying a water pitcher and glass on a tray. She is humming a tune and continues humming it as she finishes setting the table, on which she places glass con-*

taining celery, forks, knives, etc. She then goes over to kitchen stove, lifts cover of pot and, drawing out chicken which she holds up by the legs, addresses it admiringly.

AUNT TILLY

[*Addressing chicken as she draws it out of pot.*]

Yaas, Suh! Yo' cert'ly am a fine young burd! An' a fine young chase yo' give me 'fore Ah cotch yo'! Golly! Ah most break my neck and de sprintin' record runnin' yo' down in d' yard dis mornin'. But Ah got yer, ma honey! An' Ah reckon my ole man'll think yo' pretty toothsome 'fore Ah gets through with yo'. An' thar's de bacon dat's goin' on yo' chist. Jist like a little chist protector. [*Puts a slice of bacon in the pot.*] Pete he likes 'um wid bacon. An' Pete, he says dere's no white trash kin teach Aunt Tilly nothin' 'bout cookin' yo'-all. Now to sot de table. Ah's sure goin' give Pete a feast for our Weddin' Anniversary to-night.

[*Turns to table, pottering about it, rearrang-*

ing plates and chairs; takes jug of water from dresser and puts it on table, crooning as she moves about the room.]

"Oh, Nig, when yo' goes for to take yo' a wife,
Get a charmer dat's thrifty and perky,
An' one dat kin fry and kin stew and kin mend,
An' one dat knows chicken from turkey!"

[*Exits at door R. with tray in her hand as she reaches last line of song.*]

[*After a pause, window at center opens and a soldier in khaki peers cautiously in. He gazes rapturously at the dinner preparations and beckons off stage. Another soldier appears. The two admire the prospective feast in dumb show, licking their chops, rubbing their stomachs, etc., and then stealthily climb in at the window. They tiptoe into the room and, reaching stove, lift up cover of pot, sniff delightedly at the savory odor, evidencing their pleasure in dumb show, but cautioning each other to silence. Unperceived by them* AUNT TILLY *reënters with tray*

laden with vegetables, etc. She confronts intruders and, in fright, drops tray, etc.]

AUNT TILLY

Lord sabe us Massas! Wh— What yo' doin' in heah, Suhs?

SERGEANT RIVERS

[*Recovering from his surprise and laughing.*]

What are we doing in here, Aunty? Can't you see? We're just pickin' wild flowers.

CORPORAL PORTER

[*Coolly seating himself at table.*]

Yes, and this is a *pic*nic.

[*Tucks a napkin into his neck and, grabbing a bunch of celery, begins eating it greedily.*]

SERGEANT RIVERS

[*Dropping into other chair and following his companion's example.*]

Bring on your bird of Paradise, Aunty. It smells fine!

AUNT TILLY

[*Bristling and waving her arms.*]

Heah yo' Suhs! Yo' can't eat dem t'ings!

SERGEANT RIVERS

Can't we, Aunty? You just watch us!
[*Stuffs a bunch of celery into his mouth.*]

AUNT TILLY

[*Fuming.*]

Dat dinner ain't for yo', Suhs! Dat's fer my ole man Pete.

SERGEANT

[*Coolly.*]

For Pete, is it? Well, after we're fed you can *repeat* it for him. Ha! Ha! Ha!

[*Chants.*]

"One chicken between the four of us,
Thank the Lord there isn't more of us.
Pass the cake, for Heaven's sake,
A-men!"

Now, Aunty, hurry on the rooster!

CORPORAL

[*Breezily.*]

And the bacon, too! I'd eat a pig myself.

SERGEANT

You mean you'd eat *like* a pig *by* yourself! Get out of the trough!

[*Snatches a piece of bread from him and rams it into his own mouth. They "rough house" a bit laughingly.*]

VOICE

[*From outside entrance door.*]

O Till-ee! O Til-lee!

SERGEANT

[*Suddenly rising.*]

What's that?

CORPORAL

[*Alarmed.*]

Somebody's coming!

[*Both men draw their revolvers and back toward the screen.*]

AUNT TILLY

[*Dropping on her knees.*]

Mercy on us Massas! Don't shoot ma ole man! Spare his life, Suhs!

SERGEANT

[*Relieved.*]

Oh it's only Pete, is it? Well, we won't hurt him if he behaves himself.

[*Both men reseat themselves at table, laying their revolvers beside them on the table.*]

But hurry old cockalorum out of his pot, Aunty! We're near starved!

[*Enter* PETE, *breathless from hurrying, and waving a $2 bill. He starts to say "Look at this* TILLY*"—and then stops short at sight of soldiers and stands staring at them. Then he motions toward the door.*]

PETE

[*In a hoarse whisper.*]

Hi dare, you soldier-men! Yo' better make tracks, quick, 'fore yo' gits cotched. Dey's somebody coming after me!

SERGEANT

[*Pointing his gun at him.*]

There'll be *something* coming after you if you don't go 'way back and sit down, Mister Mumbo Jumbo!

PETE

[*Throwing up his hands.*]

Golly! Don't shoot dis chile, Massa!

CORPORAL

Then keep your shirt on. If you don't we'll give you one of these lead pills to quiet your nerves.

[*Threatens him with gun.*]

PETE

[*Quaking.*]

For d' lub o' Heven, Massas! I didn't bring 'um! Hope to die I didn't. He's comin' o' hisself! He—he's coming o' hisself!

CORPORAL

Who's coming?

PETE

De officer, Sah?

SERGEANT

What officer?

PETE

De Colonel, Sah.

SERGEANT

What Colonel?

PETE

De Kivalry Colonel, Sah! De boss of d' regiment.

BOTH SOLDIERS

Col. Pitcher!

[*They spring from their seats and stare at each other.*]

PETE

Yaas, Sah! Leastwise, dat's what d' orderly man call 'um.

SERGEANT

[*To Corporal.*]

Whew! That's *our* old man. What's he coming here for, you old black and tan?

[*Flourishes his gun.*]

CORPORAL

Yes—what's he coming for? Speak quick you woolly terrier or—

[*Motions with his gun.*]

PETE

[*Trembling.*]

I didn't do it, Sah ! S' help me! D' orderly he tells me d' Colonel done hear of Aunt

Tilly's famous cookin' and give 'um two dollars to get 'um good dinner. [*Showing bill.*] Dat's truth, Sahs! Sure 's I live!

SERGEANT

[*Sinks back disgustedly in chair.*]

Well, what do you think about that?

CORPORAL

[*Pulling his napkin from his neck.*]

I think we'd better put an egg in our shoes and beat it.

SERGEANT

I guess you're right. But Lord! [*Looks longingly at the stove.*] I certainly do hate to leave all those perfectly good eats for old Tub-a-guts!

AUNT TILLY

[*Bristling.*]

Dere ain't no Tub-a-guts goin' to eat dat yere dinner. Dat blowout's fer ma ole man's Weddin' An'vers'ry feast. Yo' heah me?

[*Folds her arms defiantly.*]

SERGEANT

Sure I hear you, Aunty, but it don't make me any less hungry.

CORPORAL

[*Reaching toward the pot on stove.*]

Let's grab the chicken and make for the woods.

[AUNT TILLY *throws him off and he recoils laughing.*]

SERGEANT

Not much. That 'd be rough on these old people. I know a trick worth two of that. See here, Bud—

[*Draws* CORPORAL *aside and whispers.* CORPORAL *listens, looks up and grins with dawning comprehension, slaps his leg and begins laughing uproariously.* TILLY *and* PETE *strain their ears to catch the whispered conversation.*]

CORPORAL

[*As the* SERGEANT *finishes his whispering.*]

That's a cracker jack! Whoopee! It's immense! You explain it to the old lady and I'll put Pete wise. Hurry up or Tub-a-guts'll get here before we're ready for him.

SERGEANT

[*Chuckling and beckoning smilingly to* AUNT TILLY.]

Aunt Tilly!

AUNT TILLY

[*Sulkily.*]

Yaas, Suh.

SERGEANT

You don't want old Col. Pitcher to eat up all your wedding feast—do you?

AUNT TILLY

Ah surt'ly do not, Suh!

SERGEANT

Well, neither do we, and if you'll do as we say, you'll have your celebration and get double pay for it.

[*Shows $2 bill, at which* TILLY *grabs. But* SERGEANT *snatches it back laughingly.*]

SERGEANT

Wait a bit. Have you another rig like that? [*Points to her gown and head dress.*]

AUNT TILLY

Has Ah got 'noder dress like dis yere, Suh? Yaas, Suh!

SERGEANT

Then lead me to it!

[AUNT TILLY *stares at him uncomprehendingly.*]

Quick now! Forward march, double time!

[AUNT TILLY *turns toward door at L., looking back wonderingly and tremblingly at* PETE, *but* SERGEANT *shoos her out of the room, laughing and gesturing to the grinning* CORPORAL.]

[PETE *stands staring open-mouthed at this scene and then turns to* CORPORAL *bursting into torrent of words.*]

PETE

[*Nervously.*]

Wh—What's he going to do, Sah? We don't want no trouble!. We ain't got nothin' to do wid yo'-all. We's never bin in no trouble—

CORPORAL

[*Interrupting.*]

O close your fly trap, you old Boob! Nobody's going to hurt you if you play the game. All we want is some good grub in peace and quiet and if we get it, you'll share it and get paid twice for the same meal. Now listen!

The Sergeant in there's going to dress up like Aunt Tilly. The Colonel doesn't know her or you either, does he?

[*From this point the scene, up to* SERGEANT'S *reëntry, must be played slowly to give* SERGEANT *time for change of costume. Unless, of course, another actor impersonates the* SERGEANT.]

PETE

[*Shaking his head.*]

I reckon he don't Sah!

CORPORAL

Very well then. Now listen! Old Tub-a-guts is very particular about his food and the Sergeant in there [*pointing to room at L.*] is going to make him so disgusted with this grub that he won't eat much. Or if he does, we're going to scare him away. All you've got to do is to remain out of sight until we want you. Understand?

PETE

[*Quaking.*]

I—I reckon so Massa. D' Sergeant—[*haltingly*] he's going to dress like my ole

woman . . . and sot d' Colonel 'gainst eating all dese yere good t'ings . . . and ef he gits to eating 'um, yo'-all's goin' scare 'um away and then [*brightening*] we-alls gets 'nother two dollars fer d' grub?

CORPORAL

[*Who has been watching the old man with amused expression, checking off the points of the plan as* PETE *rehearses them.*]

Yes, if the trick works. But if *you* play any tricks of your own—

[*Motions with his gun.*]

[*This whole scene is to be played by* PETE *in a palsy of fear. He must keep looking apprehensively at* CORPORAL *all the time as though afraid of his life.*]

PETE

Bless d' Lord! I'se deaf, dumb and blind, I is, Massa!

CORPORAL

[*Lowering gun slowly and gazing menacingly at* PETE.]

All right then, but see that you remain so! Now let's reset the table.

PETE

Ye—yaas, Suh!

[CORPORAL *picks up chair.* PETE, *watching him with a frightened air, makes a feeble effort to help at carrying it, holding it timidly by the leg.*]

CORPORAL

[*Laughingly.*]

Look out you don't strain your back!

PETE

[*Rubbing his back.*]

Ye—yaas, Suh!

[CORPORAL *turns to table and picks up tray.* PETE *hastens to take up other end of tray and, still watching* CORPORAL, *pretends to help him carry it to dresser at rear.*]

CORPORAL

O get out of my way, you coffee-colored heathen!

PETE

[*Recoiling tremblingly.*]

D-d-don't hit me, Massa!

CORPORAL

Hit you? I won't do a thing to you if you don't get busy.

PETE

[*Shakingly.*]

Yaas, Sah! Thank 'ee, Sah!

[CORPORAL, *turns to stove and looks in pot, sticks his finger in it and licks it with relish. Meanwhile* PETE *has hastened to dresser and replaced tray on table.* CORPORAL *turns and sees him.*]

CORPORAL

What are you doing, you crazy Gazaboo?

PETE

[*In a flutter of fear.*]

Je—jest gitting busy, Sah!

CORPORAL

I'll busy you if you don't quit your monkey shines!

PETE

Yaas, Sah! Thank 'ee, Sah.

[CORPORAL *takes up tray.* PETE *again making great pretenses of helping him carry it.*]

CORPORAL

What do you think this is—a load of hay?

PETE

No, Sah! It—it's a loaded tray, ain't it?

CORPORAL

You're a loaded loon, I think! Where's the napkins? [*Picks them up.*] Here they are. [*Places them at either end of table. As he turns to fetch water pitcher and glass* PETE *carefully replaces napkins.* CORPORAL *puts down water pitcher and glass and turns to get bread and celery dish.* PETE *lifts up pitcher and water glass and carefully replaces them in same position.* CORPORAL *puts bread and celery dish down.* PETE *moves them about an inch and stands admiring them.* CORPORAL *takes chair from center and replaces it at right end of table.* PETE *watches him and as he goes to rear of room and stands looking at general effect of table, the old negro picks up a chair, carries it around table and sets it down in same position.*]

CORPORAL

[*Laughing.*]

My! But you're the busy bee, ain't you?

PETE

Ye—yaas, Sah!

CORPORAL

Well, mind you don't overwork yourself, my buck.

PETE

[*Glancing out of window and pointing.*]

Hi, Sah! He's a-coming!

CORPORAL

[*Excitedly.*]

Who? Colonel Pitcher! [PETE *nods.*] Then beat it! Beat it, you flat-footed gump!

PETE

[*Whispering and pointing to door.*]

Dis way, Sah! Right dis way, Sah!

[*Hurried exit slamming door behind them.*]

[*A knock at door R. No answer. Another louder knock and then door slowly opens and* COLONEL PITCHER *enters. He is large and fat and looks as if he enjoyed good living. He stares at empty room*

for a moment, then approaches stove, lifts cover of pot, smacks his lips greedily.]

COLONEL

Um! Ah! Fine old Southern cooking! This is luck indeed!

[COLONEL *removes his belt and sword, takes off his gloves, seats himself at table, tucks napkin in his neck, samples slice of corn-bread, smacking his lips.*]

COLONEL

Um! Regular old-fashioned Johnny cake!

[*He settles himself down with grunt of satisfaction.*]

[*Sergeant dressed up as* AUNT TILLY *sticks his head from door L., makes a grimace at* COLONEL'S *back, and after dancing a couple of steps into room, assumes a mock solemn pose and curtsies to* COLONEL.]

SERGEANT

'Ebenin', Suh!

COLONEL

[*Turning.*]

Ah, good evening—*good* evening M'am. I suppose you're the Aunt Tilly of whom I've heard so much?

SERGEANT

[*Curtsying and winking front.*]

Ah reckon so, Suh!

COLONEL

Well, you got my message about dinner, I see.

SERGEANT

Yaas, Suh!

[*Begins fussing with things on cooking stove.*]

COLONEL

Good! I haven't tasted any genuine Southern cooking for ages and I hear you're the finest cook in all the country round.

SERGEANT

[*Bobbing another curtsy.*]

Yaas, Suh. Ah kin cert'ly cook when I'se anything *fresh* to work wid.

COLONEL

[*Looking up uneasily.*]

Well, I hope you've got a lot of fresh things to-night, Aunty.

SERGEANT

I'se done my best, Suh. But Lordy when ma t'ings *is* a bit off color I kin make 'um

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taste so 's you can't tell what's d' matter wid 'um, any ways.

COLONEL

[*Doubtfully.*]

Indeed? That's very interesting. But I hope you haven't had to exert *that* talent on *this* meal. You can serve it whenever you're ready, Aunty, for I'm prepared to do full justice to your skill to-night. [*Picks up glass of water and drains it.*] But first bring me another glass of water, please.

SERGEANT

[*Fussing at pots on stove, looks around quickly.*]

Water, Suh! Yaas, Suh. I'll git ma ole man to bring you some in a minute—ef you really wants it.

COLONEL

[*Uneasily.*]

Well, is there any reason why I shouldn't want it?

SERGEANT

[*Still fussing over pots, shrugs shoulders.*]

Um? Us folks don't drink no water here, Suh.

COLONEL

[*Looking suspiciously in his glass.*]

You don't?

SERGEANT

No, Suh. Leastwise not sense Pete's Ki-yi done had d' hydryphoby.

COLONEL

[*Smilingly, relieved.*]

Ah, I see! Your dog had the hydrophobia and got scared of water and so you thought it was bad and got scared of it too.

SERGEANT

[*Coolly.*]

No, Suh. 'Twan't 'xactly dat away.

COLONEL

[*Smilingly.*]

Well, what was it?

SERGEANT

Wall, you see, Suh, Pete's Ki-yi he got hydryphoby and drowned hisself in the well and we done have no time yit to git his body out.

[COLONEL *gags and makes frantic efforts to swab out his mouth with the napkins.*

CORPORAL *appears at door doubled up with mirth.* SERGEANT *picks up seltzer bottle and squirts at him to drive him back.* CORPORAL *vanishes.*]

SERGEANT

[*In a loud voice.*]

Hi dare, Pete! Fotch in some water for d' Colonel.

COLONEL

[*Sputtering.*]

Shut up you old fool! I don't want any more of your polluted water! I'm probably poisoned already.

SERGEANT

[*In injured tone.*]

No, Suh. Dat was d' drippings from d' roof you was swallerin'. But we ain't got no more o' dem.

COLONEL

[*Sinking back in relief.*]

Thank goodness! Well? [*Recovering his spirits.*] Is that chicken nearly ready? I'm famished and it smells delicious!

SERGEANT

Yaas, Suh. It ain't so bad considerin'—

COLONEL

[*Looking up uneasily.*]

Considering? Considering what?

SERGEANT

Why d' way it died, Suh.

COLONEL

[*Tearing napkin from his neck.*]

What! You didn't *kill* the bird? You *found* it dead!

SERGEANT

[*In a melancholy voice.*]

Yaas, Suh. Leastwise it warn't stone dead whin I found it. It wuz kinder dyin'. I shore don't know what ailed dat burd. We'se had 'um for 'bout six years and never wuz nothin' matter with him before. But last Toosdah—

COLONEL

Tuesday! Good Lord and to-day is *Saturday!* You say it died on Tuesday?

SERGEANT

Yaas, Suh, I reckon it wuz Toosdah. But mebbe it wuz Mondah. Yaas, Suh. I remembers now. It *wuz* Mondah. I goes out in d' yard and dare wuz Rastus—dat wuz d'

fowl's name, Suh—dere wuz Rastus lyin' on d' ground, frothin' at d' mouth—

COLONEL

[*Aghast.*]

Frothing at the mouth!

SERGEANT

Yaas, Suh! Little bubbles wuz kinder comin' up outer 'um [COLONEL *gags*] and his toes wuz quiverin' and turnin' up like dis way [COLONEL *gasps and clutches his throat*] and his comb—his gran' red comb and bill turns kinder blue and he coughs a couple er times and dies. [COLONEL *panic-stricken.*] D' you reckon he was pizened, Suh?

COLONEL

[*Fairly reeling but bristling with indignation.*]

Good Lord, woman, I don't know! And I'm blamed sure I'm not going to find out by eating him! [*Starts to gather his hat, gloves etc. together, but greediness and the savors from stove make him hesitate. He goes over to stove and looks in pots.*] Um! That bacon looks good. Give me some of that. [*Takes a slice out of dish and eats it.*]

SERGEANT

[*Watching him out of the corner of his eye.*]

Yaas, Suh. Dat bacon's all right. I don't keer *what* d' health officers say.

COLONEL

[*Stops chewing.*]

The health officers?

SERGEANT

Yaas, Suh, but we-uns don't pay no 'tention to what dey tells us about hogs.

COLONEL

Well, maybe you don't but I do! What did they say about this hog?

SERGEANT

Just a pack er silly lies, Suh. Dey claims he had d' foot and mouth disease but—

COLONEL

[*Roaring.*]

Foot and mouth disease!

[*Spits out bacon into his hand and rushes to the window, opens it and leans out choking and gurgling.*]

[*Door at R. opens again showing* CORPORAL *in convulsions of joy. He dances war*

dance of delight while SERGEANT *motions furiously to him to retire. Finally he angrily hurls a potato at him while he watches the* COLONEL, *who at last withdraws from window and stands mopping his face with big red handkerchief.*]

SERGEANT

[*Cooly.*]

Dinner's served, Suh!

COLONEL

[*Roaring.*]

Dinner! Do you expect me to dine off that carrion?

SERGEANT

I make 'um taste mighty tasty, Suh.

COLONEL

[*Fuming.*]

Well, you don't prove it by me! [*Looks at his watch.*] Good Lord, I'm too late for dinner at the mess now and I'm nearly famished. See here! Haven't you got anything in this place that hasn't died a suspicious death? [*Pokes about among dresser shelves.*] Yes. By Jove! Here's something that's germ proof.

[*Produces some eggs.*] Make a good old-fashioned omelette out of these, Aunty, and we'll call it square.

[*Hands dish to* SERGEANT *and reseats himself at table, picking up napkin which he tucks into his neck.* SERGEANT *makes a gesture of impatience and disgust, looks at door and signals to* CORPORAL.]

[CORPORAL *shoves* PETE *forward, who enters room carrying a yellow flag on a short pole. He shuffles mournfully toward the door.*]

COLONEL

[*Seeing him.*]

Hello, Uncle, where are you going with those queer colors?

PETE

[*Mournfully.*]

Wid dis flag, Sah? I'se goin' to put it outside d' door, Sah.

COLONEL

[*Good-naturedly.*]

What a funny idea? Why do you put a flag outside the door?

PETE

To shoo d' folk away, Sah.

COLONEL

[*Growing visibly frightened.*]

To scare the folk away? Wh—wh—what for?

PETE

[*Casually.*]

So dey don't cotch d' Yellow Jack, Sah.

COLONEL

[*Staggering to his feet.*]

Yellow Jack!! [*Turning wildly to* SERGEANT.] You mean to say you've got yellow fever in this house?

SERGEANT

Only *one* case, Suh. [AUNT TILLY *appears at door L. dressed in nightgown.*] Hi yo' Dinah! Go back to yo' baid agin! Yo's scarin' d' gent'man! [COLONEL, *wild with terror, is clutching at his belongings.*] Won't you-all just take a taste o' Rastus, Suh? [*Holds up chicken.*]

COLONEL

[*Bursting.*]

Rastus! Where's my gloves?! Where's my hat?! [*Stumbles over* PETE.] Get out of my way you crazy black idiot. Wow! I'm poisoned—murdered! Help! Get me a doctor—Wow!

[*Bolts out of door R.*]

[*Enter* CORPORAL *dragging in* AUNT TILLY, *still in nightgown, both roaring with laughter and pointing through window at retreating* COLONEL. SERGEANT *seizes* PETE'S *hand and all four dance madly around the table, chanting until they flop.*

'Rastus, Rastus,
'Tween the four of us!
Thank the Lord there isn't more of us!
Pass the bake,* for Heaven's sake!
Amen!!!

* Bacon.

[*Sink down into seats at table laughing uproariously.*]

CURTAIN

THE HEATHEN CHINEE

A Farce in One Act

THE HEATHEN CHINEE
A Farce in One Act

CHARACTERS

(*In the order in which they first speak.*)

Mr. Titus Wadd, *a miserly old lawyer.*
Kitty O'Day, *a kitchen maid.*
Danny Douglass, *a chore boy.*
Hefty Douglass, *Dan's father.*
Michael O'Day, *Kitty's father.*
Wing Wu, *the Heathen Chinee.*
(Miners and cowboys)

Place—Redwoods, California.

Scene—Mr. Wadd's room.

Time—Morning.

PROPERTIES

Newspaper,
Toy cat,
Bell,
Pin,
Dollar bill,
Twenty-five cent piece,
Shoe and shoe brush,
Broom,
Hose,
Wood,
Rail,
Soap,
Basin,
Kitchen utensils and costumes as indicated in text.
Acting time, 20 minutes.
Principal Characters, 6 (5 m.; 1 f.)

THE HEATHEN CHINEE

SCENE: MR. WADD'S *living apartment. It is a combination of bedroom, dining-room and kitchen. At rear-right (facing stage) there is a bed neatly made up. At front-centre a table set for breakfast. At left there is a stove on which there is a kettle, a toast rack and some pans. A cat is sleeping at foot of bed in plain sight of audience. The room is scantily furnished. Practical door at right and left.*

Immediately on rise of curtain MR. WADD *enters from door at right. He is a cross-looking old man wearing a dressing gown and slippers and carries a newspaper and spectacles in his hand. He moves toward table, putting on spectacles. Then glances at bed and sees cat.*

MR. WADD

Well, upon my word! There's that cat on my bed again! Make yourself at home—you

little flea-box! Don't mind me! I'd take you out in the back yard and fill you full of holes if powder wasn't so expensive. [*Glances at paper.*] Humph! Here's that Ching-fee wasting his money on another advertisement! If he'd waited a day he'd have got my postal saying I'd hire him. Well, fools and their money are soon parted and wise men get some of it. Not all, but some of it—some of it.

[*Rubs his hands together and, sitting down at table, begins reading paper, tinkling bell on table as he does so. No one answers bell. After a moment's pause he looks up, glares at door and, ringing bell loudly and impatiently, resumes his reading. No answer to bell. After another moment's pause he again looks up, smashes paper down and, seizing bell, rings it violently, first with one hand and then with the other, and finally takes hold of it with both hands and clangs it furiously. While he is thus engaged the door at R. opens and a boy and a girl rush into room and stand staring at him in evident fright and amazement. The girl is a very pretty*

Irish lass about fourteen years old. She wears a plain calico dress, the skirt reaching just below her knees and her sleeves are rolled up. She also wears an apron and cap and carries a broom in her hand. The boy is about fifteen. He wears knickerbockers and a green baize butler's apron and carries a half-blacked shoe in one hand and a blacking-brush in the other. MR. WADD *does not see them for a moment and continues wildly clanging the bell. Then he turns and discovers them.*]

MR. WADD

[*Addressing girl furiously.*]

Well! You're here at last, are you? Where's my breakfast?!

KITTY

[*Tremblingly.*]

Shure, it's on the stove, Sor.

MR. WADD

[*Mimicking her.*]

Sure it's on the stove, are you? Sure it isn't under the bed or in the wash tub or on the ceiling? Put it on the table, you fool!

KITTY

Yiz, Sor.

[*Starts to do it.*]

DANNY DOUGLASS

[*In low voice.*]

Spill the coffee on his lap, Kit!

MR. WADD

[*Noticing boy and turning on him.*]

And you're here too—are you? Who dug you up? Where's my mail, Sir?!

DANNY

[*Confusedly.*]

Your *mail,* Sir?

MR. WADD

Yes, my mail! Not my pail or my nail or my ale—but my M-A-I-L—*mail!* Get that, you pest?

DANNY

I forgot it, Sir.

MR. WADD

Forgot it, did you? Well, I hope I'll forget *you* after to-day! You're discharged—bounced—fired—kicked! Do you understand that? And you, too! [*turning to the girl.*]

Both of you! Get out of here! Beat it! Hike! Vamoose! I've had all I want of you two!

KITTY

[*Defiantly.*]

Oi'll go whin Oi gits me wages, Sor!

DANNY

Good for you, Kit!

MR. WADD

[*Putting his hand into his pocket and pulling out a dollar.*]

There's your bone! Take it and get out!

KITTY

[*Looking disgustedly at bill.*]

Is ut a *dollar*——?

MR. WADD

What do you think it is? A bird's nest?

DANNY

[*Hotly.*]

Don't you take it, Kit! Your wages are ten a month.

MR. WADD

Yes, and she's docked nine of 'em, Master Smarty! [*Takes out note book.*] Here's the

items. Breaking china, $3; Sunday out, $1; spoiling food, $2; losing keys——

KITTY

[*Indignant and almost crying.*]

Oi'll not stand for ut—you ould skinflint!

MR. WADD

Then sit for it—ninny! [*Turning to boy.*] Here's yours! [*Gives him a quarter.*]

DANNY

[*Holding it out scornfully.*]

Is this all that's coming to me?

MR. WADD

Not if your father knows his business. He'll give you the rest of it at the end of a strap. Get out before I show you how it's done!

DANNY

[*Soothingly to girl.*]

Come on, Kitty darling. We'll go to Lawyer O'Grady and he'll get our money for us. And as for you—you miserable old motheaten, flat-footed, pop-eyed, wobble-jawed, knock-kneed skin—you'll never get another soul to work for you in this town as long as you live!

MR. WADD

I won't, won't I? [*Snatches up newspaper.*] I've got one already! Look at that! [*Thrusts newspaper into girl's hands.*]

KITTY

[*Reading slowly with* DANNY *looking over her shoulder.*]

"Position wanted in a private fam'ly by a competent Chinese boy. Understands cookin' and all household duties. Wages $5 a month. Spakes English. Apply to Wing Wu, Box 9."

Is ut a hathan Chinee ye'd be after bringing to this town?

MR. WADD

[*Triumphantly.*]

Yes I would! He'll be here this morning.

DANNY

Hooroo—hooray! We'll have a Ching-fee holiday! Why Kit, the boys'll hang him with his own pigtail and tie old Tight-wad to his feet! No Chinks can stay a minute in this town.

MR. WADD

We'll see about that! Now the sooner you stop your chattering and get out of my house, the better it will be for you. If you're here when I come back I'll play the hose on you! [*Exits L.*]

DANNY

[*Flinging the shoe and shoe-brush at the door.*]

Play the hose on us, will you? We'll play the deuce with you—you lob-sided, lop-eared, pigeon-toed, mangey-headed, chicken-breasted Snipe!—[*Turning to girl.*] Get you hat and shawl, Kitty, and let's spread the news that a Chink is headed this way!

KITTY

[*Throwing aside her broom and bustling to get on her hat and shawl. She speaks with her back to* DANNY *as she adjusts her bonnet before the glass.*]

Oi'll be ready in a minut, Danny darling! What did he say the hathan's name wuz? [*Rushes from looking glass before which she is arranging her bonnet and picks up newspaper.*] Wing Wu! Apply to Wing Wu,

Box 9. Shure the boys'll apply a box to Wing Wu! An' he'll be in ut before night. Bad cess to him! [*Notices* DANNY, *who is busily engaged in fixing a pin in the seat of* WADD'S *chair.*] What are yiz afther doin', Danny?

DANNY

O, just fixing something to make old Tightwad sit up and take notice. [*Laughs and shows pin.*]

KITTY

[*Shaking her finger at him with mock solemnity.*]

Shure, you're a terrible lad, Danny! A terrible, terrible lad!

[*Laughs and gives him a big hug and runs quickly out of door L.* DANNY *stares smilingly at door for moment; rubs his cheek, and then, as though struck with a sudden idea, snatches up his cap from peg on wall and dashes out of the door L.*]

[*A moment's pause and* MR. WADD *reënters at R., glancing about room.*]

MR. WADD

Ah, they're gone! Good riddance to bad rubbish! [*Proceeds to transfer coffee pot,*

toast, bacon, etc., from stove to table.] I've worked this pretty nicely, I think. Here's my breakfast cooked and Wing Wu will be here at the 9:30—just in time to clear away the dishes. Wonder I never thought of getting a Chinese before. They work for half what the white trash get, and with a little judicious docking I ought to save something [*rubs his hands together*]. Wonderful people, the Chinese! Live on about ten grains of rice a day, they say, and maybe less—maybe less! Let's see what the price of rice is on the market to-day. [*Picks up paper.*] Never mind! [*Lays paper down.*] I'll get my breakfast first. I'm as hungry as a bear. [*Tucks napkin in neck and is about to sit down when a loud knock is heard at door L. He starts and stares angrily at door.*] Come in!

[*Enter* HEFTY DOUGLASS *and* MICHAEL O'DAY, *two stalwart miners dressed in flannel shirts rolled up at sleeves, khaki trousers stuffed into top boots and wearing sombreros. They are fierce-looking customers and each carries a revolver and a cartridge belt.*]

HEFTY

Mornin' neighbor!

MR. WADD

[*Growlingly.*]

Humph! Who are you and what do you want?

HEFTY

Jest a little information, neighbor. My name is Hefty Douglass. I'm the father of the boy that worked for you.

O'DAY

[*Threateningly.*]

Yiz, and I'm the father of Kitty O'Day [*voice rising to a roar*] and we're goin' to see that they gets what's comin' to 'em! Hear me!

MR. WADD

Yes, Sir, I do. I could hear you at twice the distance. Well, Mr. Douglass, I recommend you to train that young pup of yours with a good stout strap. And, Mr. O'Day, I suggest that you return your girl to the idiot asylum from which she evidently escaped. One word more——

16690

O'DAY

[*Shaking his fist.*]

One word more and Oi'll muss up yure features so ye won't know yure mouth from yure ear! Where's my daughter's wages?

HEFTY

And my boy's earnings!

MR. WADD

Your boy's earnings? Huh! He never *earned* anything. He's a lazy, impudent, mischievous, good-for-nothing, aggravating monkey. [*Sits down and rises with a howl.*] Wow! wow! Look at that now [*shows pin*]. That's his work!

HEFTY

[*Laughing.*]

And good work, too!

O'DAY

[*Laughing.*]

Shure, Dan must have thought Tightwad was air tight, Hefty!

[*Takes up piece of toast from table and eats it, still chuckling.*]

HEFTY

I reckon that was his o-*pin*-yon!

[*Laughs and follows O'Day's example by helping himself to food.*]

MR. WADD

[*Sitting down and pouring cup of coffee and motioning toward door.*]

I've had enough of you and your brats for one morning. Get out of here and do it quick! You've been drinking.

HEFTY

No, we ain't! But seeing it's your treat I don't mind if I do.

[*Takes up cup of coffee which* WADD *has poured for himself and drinks it.*]

MR. WADD

[*Indignantly.*]

Here, stop that!

HEFTY

[*Putting down cup.*]

Can't do it, Pard! No local stops on this subway! [*rubs his stomach.*] [*To O'Day.*] Have a piece of bacon, Mike?

O'DAY

Don't mind if I do.

[*They each take some.*]

MR. WADD

[*Furiously.*]

Here! What are you doing, you ruffian!

HEFTY

Sampling Kitty's cooking, so we can testify in the case she's going to bring against you—Tightwad!

MR. WADD

I'll have the law on you! [*Rises.*]

O'DAY

And Oi'll hov a bit of bacon on you! [*takes some*]. Sit down old Scout!

[*Shoves him back in chair.*]

What's this we hear about your importing a Chink into this town?

HEFTY

[*Fiercely.*]

Yes—how about that, you skunk? Wuz you calculatin' to harbor a yellow devil in this hut?

MR. WADD

I've hired a Chinese boy, if that's what you mean. What of it?

HEFTY

[*Warningly.*]

Just this, Wadd! The folks in our town don't like Chinks.

MR. WADD

Well, I do! Now, will you get out of here?

O'DAY

No, we won't! But the Chink will. We'll ride him out on a rail same as we did the last one that came here. Pass the butter, Hefty.

[HEFTY, *who, like* O'DAY, *has been steadily devouring* WADD'S *breakfast during the whole scene, complies.*]

HEFTY

Sure! Say, Mike, do you remember the way we bucked that last Chink on the rail? I laughed fit to split. And the Chink, he near split in two! [*Eats.*]

O'DAY

We surtinly did do stunts wid him!

MR. WADD

[*Rising.*]

If you scoundrels don't leave this house at once——

O'DAY

[*Shoving him back.*]

What'll you do, money-bags?

MR. WADD

I'll go for the Sheriff!

HEFTY

Why not send your Chink for him, Titus? Better wait till he comes.

MR. WADD

I won't wait for anything!

[*Darts from his seat and makes for the door at L., where he pauses.*]

You just stay here for five minutes more and I'll have you arrested and jailed and fined and I'll sue you for damages and take the shirts off your backs. I'll—I'll——

[*Rushes out, slamming door behind him.*]

HEFTY

[*Dropping into seat and laughing.*]

Gosh! Ain't he going to have a busy little morning!

O'DAY

He shure is a comic valentine! But he's fightin' mad now and, by the same token, Oi'm thinkin' we'd better be pullin' our freight. He's got 'em all plumb scared av him down at the Court House and if he gits the law on us——

[*There is a sudden knock at the door. The two men stare at one another inquiringly.*]

HEFTY

[*Shouting.*]

Come in!

[*Door at L. opens, a head is thrust in and* WING WU *trots into the room. He is a merry looking Chinese boy and is dressed in full native costume of gay colors. A long pigtail hangs down his back. He moves to center of room and salaams to the ground.*]

WING WU

[*Addressing both.*]

Misser Titey Waddee? Me, Wing Wu!

[*Bows again.*]

HEFTY

[*Looking him up and down and then grinning at and nudging* O'DAY.]

So, you're Wadd's new Chink, are you? [WING *bows.*] Humph! Don't break your back on my account!

O'DAY

Shure, he ain't much bigger'n a minute, is he?

HEFTY

Maybe he's only a sample of the real Chingfee. A sorter chip of the old Chink—eh?

[*To* WING.]

Speak good and plenty United States, Sonny?

WING WU

Me speakee allee samey Melican man—Gee!

[*Grins proudly.*]

HEFTY

[*Laughing.*]

The little Skeesicks!

O'DAY

He shure sounds good to me!

HEFTY

[*Struck with sudden idea.*]

Say, Mike, I got an idea.

[*Beckons* O'DAY *and whispers to him.*]

I bet the little devil don't know much English except cuss words. Let's enlarge his vocabulary for old Wadd's benefit.

O'DAY

What do ye mane?

HEFTY

You'll see. Come here, son.

[WING *approaches.*]

You savez what this is?

[*Picks up kettle and points to it.* WING *shakes his head.*]

Well, that is a kettle.

WING WU

[*Cocking his head on one side.*]

Klet-tel?

HEFTY

Yes, and you savez what this is?

[*Picks up cat from bed, stroking it as he talks.*]

WING WU

Nopee!

HEFTY

Then listen, Sonny, and learn. This is *water.*

WING WU

[*Cocking head on the other side.*]

You callee um *wat-er?*

HEFTY

[*Nodding.*]

Sure.

WING WU

[*Brightly.*]

Allite! Me savez!

O'DAY

[*Catching on to the plan.*]

And listen to me, ye hathan imp! Do ye know what this is?

[*Points to bed.*]

WING WU

Me no savez.

O'DAY

Well, that is *wood.*

WING WU

[*Pointing to bed.*]

Allee samey *wood?*

O'DAY

Yes, you bet your colored pants it is! And don't you forget it!

WING WU

[*Brightly.*]

Allite! Me savez *water* [*points to cat*], *wood!* [*points to bed*].

HEFTY

[*Pats him on the back.*]

Good! You savez what *wash* is, don't you?

WING WU

Wash—washee?

[*Makes motion of rubbing clothes over washboard and wringing them out.*]

HEFTY

Sure. You bet every Chink knows that! Now do you remember what this is?

[*Points to cat.*]

WING WU

[*Proudly.*]

Wood!

HEFTY

No, you fool! *Water—water.*

WING WU

Allite! Wat-er [*points to cat*]—*Wood!* [*points to bed*].

HEFTY

Ki-rect! Now get this in your coco! What's this?

[*Points to his head.*]

WING WU

[*Excitedly.*]

Me savez! Me savez! [*thinks for a second*] *Wood!*

O'DAY

[*Bursting with laughter.*]

Ha! Ha! Ha! True for you, hathan! 'Tis wood and hard wood at that! Shure the imp av Satan has yure number all right, Hefty. Lav me be till Oi explane it to um right, or he'll get it all mixed up. Now ye little yellow divil, whut is this?

[*Indicates his head very plainly.*]

WING WU

[*Thinks for a minute.*]

Me savez!

[*Puts his finger on* O'DAY's *head.*]

Nutty!

HEFTY

[*Howling at* O'DAY's *discomfiture.*]

Good for you, Sonny! He's nutty all right enough. But we call his nut *dishes.* Savez?

WING WU

Nut, allee samey *dishes?* Allite! Me savez!

O'DAY

And this [*picking up broom*] is a pitcher——

HEFTY

[*Interrupting.*]

Hist! Mike. Here comes Wadd. Beat it—use the window! Quick!

[*They clamber out of the window. As* HEFTY *crawls out he looks back and remarks.*]

Bye-bye, Chink! Don't forget your lessons!

O'DAY

[*Sticking in his head.*]

Yes, and be ready in about half an hour for a nice riding lesson—riding on a rail! Nutty, indade! Oi'll nutty you!

[*Closes window.*]

[*Enter* MR. WADD *at L. He is hot and evidently in a very bad temper. He rushes into room dragging a hose with him, but seeing room apparently empty* (WING WU *has retreated behind stove*) *glares angrily around him and drops hose.*]

MR. WADD

Ah! They've gone, have they? If they'd known that that miserable hound of a Sheriff wouldn't stir a foot to help me, I suppose they'd have stayed and eaten me out of house and home. But I'll help myself! I'll drive the cowardly cur out of office and teach these people some law they never knew before!

[WING *coughs and* WADD *starts.*]

What the deuce is that?

[*Seizes hose.* WING WU *trots out and salaams.*]

Who the dickens are you?

WING WU

[*Salaaming.*]

Me Wing Wu!

MR. WADD

Wing Wu? O you are—are you?

[*To himself.*]

He isn't very big, but maybe he hasn't got a big appetite. That'll be some comfort. Well, how are you, son?

WING WU

[*Brightly.*]

Me belly well!

MR. WADD

I don't care how your belly is! What I want to know is, are you ready to get to work?

WING WU

Me no savez.

MR. WADD

Well, I'll make you savez soon enough. But first, I'll get some breakfast.

[*Looks in coffee pot and finds it empty.*]

Huh! Those ruffians have drunk up all my coffee! Here, you little devil—put some water in the kettle.

WING WU

Me puttee *water* in klettel?

MR. WADD

Yes, idiot!

WING WU

Me clatchee *water* and putee um in klet-tel?

MR. WADD

Yes—yes—yes! How many more times do you want me to say it? Put water in the kettle!

[*He sits down at table, puts on spectacles and begins to read.* WING *shrugs his shoulders and, getting down on floor, begins to stalk the cat on the bed. Finally he creeps up and with a sudden movement grabs the cat. Cat yowls.*]

WING WU

[*Triumphantly.*]

Me clatchee water allite!

[*Runs to kettle and tries to shove cat into it.*]

MR. WADD

[*Springing to the rescue.*]

Here, you crazy heathen—what are you trying to do?

[*Grabs cat from him.*]

WING WU

Me puttee water in klet-tel!

MR. WADD

Water—you fool? That's the cat, not the water.

WING WU

Melicy man call um *water.*

MR. WADD

Well, you call um water again and I'll stick your head in a pail of the real thing!

[*Looks in stove.*]

Blast it! The fire's nearly out. Get in some wood!

WING WU

[*Finger on head.*]

Wood? Wood? [*Remembers and grins.*] Me [*pointing to himself*] gettee in wood?

MR. WADD

Yes! Do you suppose I'm going to wait on you? [*Roars.*] *Get-in-the-wood!*

WING WU

[*Darting across room.*]

Allite!

[*Makes a flying leap, lands on bed and covers himself up with clothes.*]

MR. WADD

What the—— Get out of there, you dirty, yellow-skinned—[*makes dash for him.*]

WING WU

[*Hopping out and retreating behind bed.*]
You tellee me get in wood.

MR. WADD

Yes, and you get in the bed!

WING WU

Bed allee samey wood.

MR. WADD

I'll teach you what wood is with a good stout stick! Don't you know any English at all?

WING WU

[*Offendedly.*]
Me speekee allee samey Melicy man. Gosh!

MR. WADD

You're crazy! Do you know how to wash dishes?

WING WU

[*Brightly, clapping hands.*]
Me washey dishes good and plenty. Soap! [*indicates soap.*] *Washee!* [*illustrates.*]

MR. WADD

Well, thank heaven you *do* know something. Now, while I'm getting a bite to eat, you wash

the dishes those ruffians dirtied. Understand? Wash—the—dishes!!

WING WU

Me savez!

[WADD *sits down and picking up paper begins reading as he eats some bread he has taken from side-table.* WING, *behind him, gets basin and makes lather with soap. Then, approaching him, scoops up a handful of suds and slops it down on* WADD'S *head and begins rubbing it in.* WADD *roars but* WING *keeps on shampooing him and while he is still at it, door bursts open and miners and cowboys, headed by* HEFTY *and* O'DAY *enter, bearing a rail. They yell,* "Here he is! Here's the Chink!" "Get the rail ready! Hoist him up!" *etc.* KITTY *dances around them in delight. They seize* WING *and, hoisting him on rail, begin riding him toward door.* WING *struggles and finally squirms off.*]

WING WU

Aw—quit it! Quit it, Dad, won't you?

[*Pulls off wig.*]

HEFTY

Why if it isn't Danny!!

DANNY

Of course it is! I've been washing his *dishes* just as you told me!

HEFTY

Why, you little scamp! You fooled me!

DANNY

[*Tapping his head.*]

Wood!

[HEFTY *makes a motion toward him.* DAN *taps his forehead and points to* O'DAY.]

Nutty!

[*Both men laugh.*]

O'DAY

Shure, I ought to give ye a riding lesson for that, ye little rascal. But the horse is engaged. Come on Wad! Up with yiz!

[*Crowd seizes* WADD *and rides him out on the rail, crying* Giddap! Gee-Gee! Don't back him! Hold tight! *etc.*]

KITTY

[*Looking at Danny as crowd exit.*]
Wing Wu—indade! Danny—Danny! Yu're a terrible lad—a terrible, terrible lad!
[*Gives him a hug.*]

DANNY

Kitty O'Day—you're a darling!
[*Gives her a hug.*]

CURTAIN

A KNOTTY PROBLEM

A Boy Scout Farce in One Act

A KNOTTY PROBLEM

A Boy Scout Farce in One Act.

CHARACTERS

(*In the order in which they first speak.*)

Bud Clark
Dick Peters } *Boy Scouts.*
Phil Foster

Mrs. Peters, *Mother of Dick.*

Mrs. Foster, *Mother of Phil.*

Nutty Nathan
Phoney Frank } *Undesirable Citizens.*

Patrol Leader and Troop

Scene—Mrs. Peters' Parlor.

Time—The Present.

PROPERTIES

Plates,
Cups and saucers,
Cake,
Sugar bowl,
Teapot,
Waste paper basket,
Two six-foot ropes and a few shorter pieces,
Piece of string,
Pistol,
Cent,
Whistle,
Burlap bag,
Silver cup,
Costumes and furnishings as indicated in text.

Acting time, 20 minutes.
Principal characters, 7 (5 m.; 2 f.)

A KNOTTY PROBLEM

SCENE: MRS. PETERS' *parlor. Table covered with table cloth reaching floor, in center. Near it is a waste paper basket. Stove or fireplace at left. Another table at rear right (facing stage) and a big wood box at extreme right. Room otherwise appropriately furnished. There is a tea kettle on stove, and, on center table, plates, cups, cake, etc., etc., set for afternoon tea.*

The rise of curtain discloses an empty stage. After a moment's pause DICK PETERS, *a boy of 15, sticks his head from under table cloth of center table, glances hastily around room and then disappears. Then from under the table comes the sound of raps.* [— — —, — . —] *This International Morse signal* [*signifying "O.K."*], *is answered from under the table right rear.* [. . .,—., *meaning in International code* ***S.N.***, *or "Understood."*] *This in turn is*

answered from the wood-box. [. . . ,—. *meaning S.N., or "Understood."*]

DICK PETERS' *head again appears from under the center table.* PHIL FOSTER, *a boy of about 15 years, sticks his head from under table cover, right rear, and the lid of the wood box opens disclosing head of* BUD CLARK, *a boy of 14. They look questioningly at one another and all together emit the exclamation:* "Whew!"

All three boys, who are dressed in Scout summer uniform [*Khaki shorts, rolled stockings, bare knees and Khaki shirts*], *then begin to crawl out, stretching themselves as though relieved at escaping from their cramped quarters, but all of them glancing anxiously from time to time at the door left. They show by their actions an anxiety to make no noise. As they are doing this the following dialogue is spoken.*

BUD

[*As he gets out of the wood box*]

Gosh! I thought you were never going to give the signal, Dick!

DICK

How could I, you little boob, until the coast was clear?

BUD

Well, I don't care if your mother finds us here or not. I wouldn't go back in that box for five dollars!

DICK

Nobody but a fool would go in there for five dollars. That's a wood box—not a money-box.

PHIL

[*Sarcastically.*]

Ha! Ha! Ain't you the smart little Alick-with-a-light-blue-sash!

[*A bell rings outside.*]

BUD

Hush! Somebody's coming!

[*A sound of conversation is heard outside*]

MRS. PETERS

[*Outside.*]

Why, Mrs. Foster, I'm real glad to see you —won't you come right in?

MRS. FOSTER

[*Outside.*]

Thank you, my dear, I was just passing by and thought I might catch you.

[*At the sound of these words the boys stand petrified for a moment and then bolt into their hiding places, disappearing just as* MRS. PETERS *and* MRS. FOSTER *enter the room.* MRS. PETERS *is dressed in house gown and* MRS. FOSTER *in street attire.* MRS. PETERS *is talking as she appears.*]

MRS. PETERS

My dear, it's the funniest thing! I was thinking of you only this afternoon when I was setting out the tea things, and I said to myself, "I wish Mrs. Foster would come around to-day." And here you are! Isn't it queer?

MRS. FOSTER

It's awfully *nice,* Mrs. Peters.

MRS. PETERS

Now do sit down and make yourself at home so we can have a real *long* chat.

[*As she says this, lid of wood-box opens and* BUD *puts his head up and pants despair-*

ingly. The other boys stick their heads out and motion him back.]

[MRS. FOSTER *sits down at left of center table and* MRS. PETERS, *taking tea-kettle off stove, begins to pour tea. She speaks the following lines as* MRS. FOSTER *sits down, and finishes as she begins to pour tea.*]

MRS. PETERS

It's perfectly ridiculous that we don't see more of each other, Mrs. Foster. But we all have so much to do, there never seems time for anything we really want to do—does there? You still take milk and sugar, dear?

MRS. FOSTER

Yes, two lumps, please. My husband says our boy Phil gets his sweet tooth from me.

[MRS. PETERS *puts the sugar in.*]

MRS. PETERS

[*With honied politeness.*]

And it's not the *only* sweet thing he gets from his mother, my dear.

[*Hands* MRS. FOSTER *the cup.*]

MRS. FOSTER

[*Taking cup.*]

My *dear!* It's sweet of you to say so.

MRS. PETERS

Not at all. It's only the truth. And how *is* your boy?

[*Pours tea for herself.*]

MRS. FOSTER

Phil? Oh, he's well and hearty.

MRS. PETERS

And has a hearty appetite, I suppose?

MRS. FOSTER

Appetite! I declare I sometimes think he's hollow inside.

MRS. PETERS

Yes, I know! Hasn't he joined the Boy Scouts lately?

[*Sitting down and stirring her tea.*]

MRS. FOSTER

Yes—I believe so.

MRS. PETERS

What do you think of the Scouts?

[*Sipping her tea.*]

I'm sure I don't know. But my husband says they're good for discipline and training. I certainly hope so, for, goodness knows, my Phil is something of a handful.

MRS. PETERS

Well, as the boys say, he "hasn't anything" on my Dick in that line. Dick's in the Troop, too, you know.

MRS. FOSTER

[*Nodding.*]

Of course! I do hope the Scoutmaster will teach them to play nice *quiet* games, don't you? My boy clatters up and down stairs and makes so much noise all the time that my nerves get perfectly raw. And when he brings a lot of others home——

MRS. PETERS

[*Interrupting.*]

That's something I *don't* allow! I tell Dick I simply won't have the whole house upset. So he never brings any boys here.

[*Passes cake to* MRS. FOSTER.]

[*The boys stick their heads out signalling and grinning at one another.*]

MRS. FOSTER

[*Taking cake.*]

You're quite right. But Phil makes lots of trouble all by himself. Only last week he used two of my best napkins for signal flags.

MRS. PETERS

Gracious! But does he ever tie queer knots in the curtain cords? That's what my Dick did.

MRS. FOSTER

No, but he went into the kitchen one day and tried to cook some horrid mess that boiled over on the range and smelt frightfully for days.

MRS. PETERS

Dear me! He must be a perfect little terror.

MRS. FOSTER

[*Bristling.*]

Well, I don't know that he's any worse than some *other* boys I know.

MRS. PETERS

[*Bristling.*]

Meaning my Dick, Mrs. Foster?

MRS. FOSTER

[*Cattily.*]

Weren't you thinking of him, dear?

MRS. PETERS

I was thinking that he'd seen a bit too much of some of the boys in this village.

MRS. FOSTER

[*Rising.*]

Meaning my Phil, Mrs. Peters?

MRS. PETERS

[*Cattily.*]

Weren't you thinking of him, dear? You said yourself——

MRS. FOSTER

[*Angrily.*]

I beg your pardon, I did not! Before you take to criticising *my* boy, Mrs. Peters, you'd better train that young ruffian of yours.

MRS. PETERS

[*Rising.*]

Ruffian indeed! If *my* boy's a ruffian, what do you call *your* ill-mannered, misbehaved young nuisance?

MRS. FOSTER

[*With rising voice.*]

Misbehaved! Who says so? There's not a better boy in this village than my Phil!

MRS. PETERS

[*Louder.*]

Not a worse one you mean! But he'll not contaminate my Dick any more!

MRS. FOSTER

[*Almost shouting.*]

Contaminate Dick! Ha ha! I like that! My boy's a fine, manly fellow, not a namby-pamby, empty-headed nincompoop like yours!

[*Goes towards door.*]

MRS. PETERS

[*Equally loud.*]

You mean he's got some manners and isn't a rough-necked, loud-mouthed, impudent puppy like yours!

MRS. FOSTER

[*Bawling.*]

I won't stay and listen to my boy being abused! Good day, Ma'am!

[*Exit.*]

MRS. PETERS

[*Following her out and bawling as she goes.*]

And I won't have you stay and insult my son! Good riddance, Ma'am!

[*Exit still talking excitedly.*]

[*As they disappear the boys reappear from their hiding places.* BUD *speaks from the wood box.*]

BUD

[*Pointing finger at* DICK.]

Hello "Nincompoop Dick!"

DICK

Shut up!

BUD

[*Pointing at* PHIL.]

Hello "Rough-neck Phil!"

PHIL

Shut up!!

BUD

[*Laughing.*]

Gee! but you fellows got what was coming to you!

[*Gets out of box and comes down front.*]

PHIL

[*Stepping up to him.*]

And you'll get what's coming to you if you don't close your trap!

DICK

[*Closing in on the other side.*]

Yes and sit on the lid!

BUD

[*Throwing up his hands laughingly.*]

All right, all right! I'm neutral! Let's go down to the meeting. We're late enough already.

[*Looks out of door or window.*]

There's the Troop going off on a hike now. Come on!

[*Bolts.*]

DICK

All right! I'll come as soon as I get my hat. I left it under the table.

PHIL

Same here!

[*Both crawl under the table.*]

[*As they do so,* "PHONEY FRANK" *and* "NUTTY NATHAN" *enter. They are tramp burglars, with fantastically comic get-up.* PHONEY *carries a pistol and* NUTTY *a bag and a club. They slip in through the door and stand looking around.* NUTTY *at once picks up a silver cup from the mantlepiece and slips it into his bag. The boys stick their heads out, see the tramps and instantly disappear.*]

NUTTY

This looks good to me, Phoney!

PHONEY

Betcha life! And see the eats all ready for us! Guess they musta known we wuz comin'.

[*Approaches table under which* DICK *is hidden.* DICK *pinches* PHONEY'S *leg, barking like a dog.*]

PHONEY

[*Dropping his pistol and falling back, feeling the calf of his leg.*]

Cheese it, Nutty! Der's a dog under dere!

[NUTTY *backs against* PHIL'S *table.* PHIL *pinches him, growling like a dog.* NUTTY *recoils.*]

NUTTY

And der's one in here! Say! Dis ain't no house—it's a dog kennel!

PHONEY

Let's get 'em out.

[*Approaches* DICK'S *table cautiously.*]

Here doggie—doggie—doggie!

[DICK *growls.*]

Gee! This one don't sound like no drawing-room pet!

[*Picks up pistol.*]

NUTTY

[*Approaching table and taking up a piece of cake.*]

Youse don't know howta handle 'em. Watch me get solid with my kiyi.

[*Goes up cautiously to* PHIL'S *table and drawing up edge of cloth offers cake.* PHIL *bites his finger and he recoils howling.*]

Wow! wow! The cur's durn near bit me finger off!

[PHONEY *laughs. Goes over to* NUTTY *who is nursing his finger and they examine the injury. As their backs are turned the boys spring from under the tables.*]

PHONEY

[*Hearing noise, discovering boys and pointing his pistol.*]

Here you kids! What yer doin' here!

[NUTTY *hastens to door and locks it.*]

DICK

[*Smiling.*]

Playing kiss-in-the-ring, Tatters. What are you doing here yourself?

PHONEY

None of your biz, young feller!

NUTTY

That's right and keep your mouth closed or you'll get hurt, see?

[*Advances threateningly.*]

PHONEY

[*As* NUTTY *nears table.*]

Look out for the dog, Nut!

[NUT *jumps wide of the table. Boys laugh.*]

NUTTY

[*To boys.*]

Where's your Ma keep her silver, little ones?

PHIL

[*Winking at* DICK.]

In the gold closet, three stories up on the left-hand side, second turning to the right coming down, and watch your step!

NUTTY

[*Threateningly.*]

Don't you get gay with us, you young hop-toad!

[*Raises his hand.*]

DICK

Look out or my dog'll get you!

[NUTTY *moves back.*]

PHONEY

[*Looking the boys over.*]

What kinda rigs are them you've got on, you half-naked wops?

NUTTY

Yes, wot's the idea?

PHIL

We're scouts.

NUTTY

[*Scornfully.*]

Scouts is ye? Look out, Phoney! Them fellows is dangerous! They learns what the birdies mean when they say "peep-peep!" and wot the wild flowers whisper in der sleep.

PHONEY

Sure, I know! Dey makes daisy chains in de park and paste pretty pictures in a book. Don't yer, Sonny?

DICK

[*Smiling.*]

Oh, sure we do that *when we're not training our bloodhounds.*

NUTTY

Bloodhounds?!

PHIL

Man-hunting bloodhounds.

[*Whistles.*]

PHONEY

[*Nervously.*]

Cut it out now! We ain't looking for trouble and won't give none if you behaves yourself. But honest now, cross your heart, does

you Scouts learn anything 'cept de languidge of der flowers?

DICK

Sure!

NUTTY

[*Sitting down at table and beginning to eat.*]

F'instance, wot?

DICK

Signalling.

[*He raps on table:* . . ., — — —, . . . *meaning SOS*]

PHONEY

[*Pointing gun at him.*]

Well, don't you do no signalling here unless you wants ter die young!

[*Sits down at table and joins* NUTTY *at tea.*]

PHIL

We can signal without making any noise, if that's what you're afraid of. This way——

[*Semaphores,* "Got plan. Back me up."]

NUTTY

[*Glancing at* PHIL.]

Gosh! That's funny sorta work. Reminds me of the mesmerist feller we onct seen on the stage—— 'Member him, Phoney?

[*Tries to imitate semaphore motions while stuffing food into his mouth.* PHONEY *gulps tea.*]

PHIL

[*Swiftly, aside to* DICK]

Get what I said?

DICK

[*Aside.*]

Sure! Signal rest of the plan!

[PHIL *continues signalling behind the men,* DICK *nodding that he understands.*]

PHONEY

[*Turning to watch the boys as he gulps his tea.*]

It does sure look sorta bug house. Got any other stunts, kids?

PHIL

Lots of 'em. We can tie all sorts of knots.

NUTTY

[*Sarcastically.*]

You can, eh? Well, let's see you tie the marriage knot.

DICK

Sure that's easy!

[*Takes up string from table.*]

It's the *slip* knot.

[*Makes knot quickly.*]

PHIL

Sometimes known as the halter knot.

PHONEY

Gee! ain't you the bright kids, I don't think!

DICK

[*Making and showing another knot to* NUTTY.]

Here's a knot that'll interest you some day.

NUTTY

Wot's dat?

DICK

The hangman's!

NUTTY

I'll wring your neck, you young jackanapes, if you keep on gittin' gay wid me!

[*Rising.*]

Now tell us where the real stuff is in dis crib, and do it quick! See?

DICK

[*Picking up a rope from paper basket.*]

Here's a good knot. Did you ever see this one? It's a bowline. You make it like this. It isn't hard.

[*Makes knot.*]

PHONEY

[*Watching him.*]

Dat's dead easy.

[*Tries it and fails.*]

NUTTY

[*Looking over his shoulder.*]

You always wuz a butter finger! Let me do it!

[*Takes rope, tries knot and bungles it.* PHONEY *laughs.*]

PHONEY

If my fingers is butter yours is punk! Hand it over ter yer Uncle Dudley.

[DICK *gestures to* PHIL, *who takes another rope out of paper basket.*]

PHIL

Here's another rope; let me show you.

[PHONEY *moves to him.*]

Now you hold the rope like this.

[*Illustrates.*]

Follow the end around with your finger like this.

[*Illustrates.*]

Make a loop this way and draw the end around so. And there you are!

[*Shows knot.*]

DICK

[*To* NUTTY.]

I can teach you a better way. Make a loop first like this.

[*Illustrates.*]

Draw your end through like that and pull through like this.

[*Illustrates.*]

NUTTY

It's a cinch!

PHIL

That's a punk way.

[*To* DICK.]

Bet you my man can learn it quicker than yours.

PHONEY

[*Patting himself on chest.*]

You gotta better man to teach!

NUTTY

[*To* DICK.]

Not on yer life!

DICK

I'll bet you!

PHIL

All right!

DICK

Done!

[*To* NUTTY.]

You take the rope.

[*Gives it to him.*]

Cross it like that. Follow it through with your finger. Fine! Now make the loop. Good! Now put this end in here. That's right—— Go on! Go on! Whoop! There you are!

[*As* DICK *is saying this* PHIL *says to* PHONEY, *both boys speaking at same time.*]

PHIL

Here—— catch hold!

[*Gives him rope.*]

Make your loop. All right! Now push it through here and under there. Bully! Follow it in there and over here. Great! There you are!

DICK AND PHIL

[*Exhibiting knots to each other.*]

My man's got it!

NUTTY

Dat's pretty good fun.

PHONEY

Mine's a daisy. It won't pull out.

DICK

Neither of them will. Now each of you try by yourself.

[PHONEY *and* NUTTY *make the knots very bunglingly, hurrying as fast as they can. As they work* DICK *and* PHIL *each encourages his man, crying* "Go it!" "Gid-dap!" "Not that way!" "Slip it through now!" "Hurry!" "Now you've got it!" *and such expressions, both talking at once. As they finish, each grabs his man's rope and shows it to the other excitedly.*]

DICK AND PHIL

[*Together.*]

There!

NUTTY

[*To* PHONEY.]

I beat you to a frazzle!

PHONEY

[*To* NUTTY.]

Yer did not! I done you!

DICK

The only fair test is to see who can tie it best with his hands behind his back. That's what we have to do.

NUTTY

All right! I could beat that big stiff with one hand tied behind me.

PHONEY

Yes you could! I'd tie it with my toes better'n you could with your hands.

PHIL

Well let's see!

[*To* PHONEY.]

Now you stand there.

[*Places him facing audience at right and standing behind him puts rope over his arms.* PHONEY *puts his hands behind him and grasps ends of rope.*]

DICK

[*To* NUTTY.]

And you stand here.

[*Places him in similar position at left.*]

Now then, we'll stand behind you to see fair play. Are you ready?

NUTTY

Um!

PHONEY

Yep!

PHIL

Then—one—two—three—go!

PHIL AND DICK

[*Together.*]

Go it old horse! Bully for you! That's right! Hurry! You've got it. *Now!!*

[*Each boy springs at his rope and tightens it drawing men's arms close beside them. Men struggle. In the struggle they tumble down on the floor, Scouts on top.*]

DICK

[*As he ties his man.*]

There's a timber hitch, Nutty, and two half hitches! No use struggling!

PHIL

[*Tying his man.*]

And here's two more half hitches and a halter knot, Phoney! I knew you'd like it!

DICK

[*As he finishes.*]

And here goes a clove hitch and a square knot for luck! There! Now they're nicely tied up, Dick. Let's loose the dogs!

NUTTY AND PHONEY

[*As they lie tightly bound on the floor.*]

Mercy! Mercy!

DICK AND PHIL

[*Jumping under tables and pulling up table cloths.*]

Bow! wow! wow!

NUTTY

Wait till we get loose, you snips! We'll show you!

DICK

[*Bounding out.*]

Will you show us how to make daisy chains? That's what you said the Scouts did—didn't you?

PHIL

[*Mockingly.*]

How do you like the Scouts' daisy chains?

DICK

[*Unlocking door.*]

Here comes the Troop! Now listen and see what this "peep-peep" does.

[*Blows whistle and signals.*]

[*Enter* MRS. PETERS.]

MRS. PETERS

Why, what does this mean?

PHIL

[*Excitedly.*]

It means we've captured two fellows who were going to rob your house, Mrs. Peters! Dick thought out the plan.

DICK

It was just as much Phil's as mine. He caught on quick and worked it out. You see it was like this——

[*Enter* MRS. FOSTER.]

MRS. FOSTER

Ah, I find you here! Come right home this minute, Phil, and don't you ever dare go into this house again!

MRS. PETERS

Please don't say that, my dear Mary. Your boy and mine have succeeded in catching these two fellows who were going to rob our house. I'm sure Phil is welcome to come here whenever he wants. I didn't mean a thing I said about him.

MRS. FOSTER

And I didn't mean what I said about Dick. Dick, you're a duck!

[*Tries to kiss* DICK *but he dodges.*]

[*Troop of Boy Scouts, responding to whistle, rush in headed by their* PATROL LEADER.]

PATROL LEADER

[*Seeing* NUTTY *and* PHONEY.]

Hello, Peters! What's the trouble here?

DICK

Two fellows want first aid to the police station.

PATROL LEADER

All right!

[*To Troop.*]

Form stretchers!

[*Scouts start to make stretchers with their staffs and coats.*]

Now tell us all about it. How did you get these guys tied up?

[*All gather around* DICK *and* PHIL.]

DICK

Well, it was this way——

QUICK CURTAIN

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